

Ten Essentials

This list of the Ten Essentials is based on the Mount Rainier National Park recommended list of items necessary to be prepared for minor injuries, sudden weather changes, or unexpected delays in your trip.

1. A map of the area

- a. One should always have a map of the area where one is travelling. It is important that you know where you are starting, where you are going and how to read the map.
- b. Most hikes only require a local trail map of the area.
- c. For any hiking in the woods, it is recommended that you carry a USGS, topographic map of the area.

2. A compass

- a. A good compass can be invaluable with a good map in the event that you get lost on the trail. Remind the students that this is a magnetic compass not one typically used in math.
- b. A Global Positioning System (GPS) is also good to carry with you if available. These are expensive and require batteries which can fail during the trip. While good to carry, these may be cost prohibitive and not readily available to students.

3. A flashlight with extra batteries/bulb

- a. A flashlight can be used if you are travelling on the trail and night falls so that you can see your way. If you are lost at night, it can also serve as a signal device to rescuers.
- b. Type or style are not important.

4. Extra Food/Water

- a. You never know when you might want an extra snack. You also may underestimate your ability to cover a given distance in a set amount of time. You may also find yourself in a situation where you need to stay overnight in the woods and will want extra food to tide you over.
- b. You should always carry extra water for a trip. Few areas provide drinkable or “potable” water in the woods.

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5. Extra clothing, including rain gear

- a. The weather in many places can change suddenly. Be prepared for the weather by packing accordingly. Rain gear can be invaluable in Western Washington especially in the National Parks where the weather is subject to change suddenly.
- b. Check the weather before the trip to determine specific clothing needs in order to be prepared.

6. Sunglasses and sunscreen

- a. Sunglasses and sunscreen are not just for bright sunny days. If you are hiking on snow, the sun will reflect back on you from the snow and you are more likely to get sunburn.
- b. If you are hiking on the snow, it is strongly advised that you wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from burns to your eyes. Snowblindness, a burn to the cornea of the eye, can occur if the hiker is not wearing eye protection on the eyes.

7. A pocketknife

- a. A good knife in the woods is a powerful survival tool. A good knife of quality craftsmanship is recommended. This is not a toy; rather a tool that serves many uses both in a camp setting and in the event that the hiker needs to survive the night in the wild.
- b. NOTE: Remind students that they must abide by all school rules regarding weapons on any school sponsored trip. While you may share this as one of the ten essentials, for field trips, this is not a required item.

8. Matches in a waterproof container

- a. Matches or a lighter in a waterproof container are useful if you are lost and must stay the night in the woods. These may also be used to start fires to warm individuals who have become cold due to weather conditions if necessary.
- b. Remind students that they must follow all rules regarding fire danger levels in the area that they are hiking.
- c. Fires may be started in survival situations in the forest when fire danger does exist, though should only be started by someone who knows how to do so safely.

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9. A candle or other fire starter

- a. A candle or other fire starter can help to start a fire where it may be difficult to start a fire due to conditions.
- b. There are a great number of recommended fire starters available commercially.

10. A first aid kit

- a. Injuries happen. A basic first aid kit should be able to patch small injuries, such as cuts or scrapes, until help can be reached.
- b. There are many commercial products available on the market for basic first aid kits.